## Post-Hearing Questions for the Record Submitted to Brenda S. Farrell From Chairman Claire McCaskill

"Safeguarding Our Nation's Secrets: Examining the Security Clearance Process"

June 20, 2013

1. Please produce a scorecard of the Federal Investigative Services' progress toward recommendations provided by the Government Accountability Office toward improving their processes and management of the background investigation process.

In enclosure II, we provide a scorecard of the implementation status of five recommendations we made in three separate reports to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) between 2009 and 2012 related to its background investigation program, an important component of the security clearance process. We directed two of these recommendations (in our July 2012 report) to the Director of National Intelligence as well. GAO has maintained an ongoing dialogue with OPM and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence regarding the status of the five recommendations. Although OPM has provided evidence that Federal Investigative Services has taken action to address these recommendations, OPM's responses to the recommendations are not yet complete, and therefore the recommendations remain open. In enclosure II, we list the specific actions OPM (and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence) have taken to respond to our recommendations.

Since 2005 we have made recommendations in seven reports to multiple executive branch agencies—including the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of National Intelligence, OPM, and the Department of Defense (DOD)—on issues related to the government-wide effort to reform the security clearance process.<sup>3</sup> Also in 2005, we placed DOD's personnel security clearance program on our High-Risk List due to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>GAO, Security Clearances: Agencies Need Clearly Defined Policy for Determining Civilian Position Requirements, GAO-12-800 (Washington, D.C.: July 12, 2012); Background Investigations: Office of Personnel Management Needs to Improve Transparency of Its Pricing and Seek Cost Savings, GAO-12-197 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012); and DOD Personnel Clearances: Comprehensive Timeliness Reporting, Complete Clearance Documentation, and Quality Measures Are Needed to Further Improve the Clearance Process, GAO-09-400 (Washington, D.C.: May 19, 2009). <sup>2</sup>GAO-12-800.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>GAO-12-800; GAO-12-197; GAO, Personnel Security Clearances: Progress Has Been Made to Improve Timeliness but Continued Oversight Is Needed to Sustain Momentum, GAO-11-65 (Washington, D.C.: November 19, 2010); GAO-09-400; Personnel Security Clearances: An Outcome-Focused Strategy Is Needed to Guide Implementation of the Reformed Clearance Process, GAO-09-488 (Washington, D.C.: May 19, 2009); DOD Personnel Clearances: Improved Annual Reporting Would Enable More Informed Congressional Oversight, GAO-08-350 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 13, 2008); and DOD Personnel Clearances: Additional OMB Actions Are Needed to Improve the Security Clearance Process, GAO-06-1070 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2006).

problems with timeliness and quality. In 2011, we removed DOD's personnel security clearance program from our High-Risk List because of progress in improving the timeliness of granting security clearances, and also because of tools and metrics that DOD had developed to assess the quality of investigations and adjudications. At that time, we noted that it is important for personnel security clearance reform leaders from the government-wide Performance Accountability Council to ensure that other non-DOD executive branch agencies also develop the plans and tools necessary to make progress in timeliness and ensure that quality metrics are applied and reported. Also, we have previously reported that agencies' ability to meet timeliness goals should not be carried out at the expense of quality and that, while OPM has identified an agency priority goal in response to the Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 regarding timeliness, that goal does not capture he competing priority of measuring the quality of background investigations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>GAO, High-Risk Series: An Update, GAO-05-207 (Washington, D.C.: January, 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>GAO, High-Risk Series: An Update, GAO-11-278 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 16, 2011).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>GAO, Personnel Security Clearances: Continuing Leadership and Attention Can Enhance Momentum Gained from Reform Effort, GAO-12-815T (Washington, D.C.: June 21, 2012) and Managing for Results: Agencies Should More Fully Develop Priority Goals under the GPRA Modernization Act, GAO-13-174 (Washington, D.C.: Apr.19, 2013).